

Message Text

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USDEL MC

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NATO, TS, PFOR, MOPS

SUBJECT: PROPOSAL FOR NAVOCFORMED VISIT TO TUNIS

REF: (A) USNATO 3534

(B) TUNIS 3717

(C) ALGIERS 1502

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM UNDERSECRETARY PORTER

1. WHILE WE AGREE WITH MISSION ASSESSMENT THAT THIS MAY NOT BE AN OPPORTUNE MOMENT TO RAISE THE SPANISH QUESTION (SEE SEPTTEL), WE STILL BELIEVE THAT THE POSSIBLE RISKS OF THE PROPOSED VISIT TO TUNIS OUTWEIGH THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS AT THIS TIME.

2. THE NEGATIVE REACTIONS OF TUNIS AND USINT ALGIERS ARE FOUNDED NOT ONLY ON THE PROXIMITY OF THE PROPOSED VISIT TO THE NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE, BUT ALSO ON THE FACT THAT THE NORTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE THUS FAR REFUSED TO ALLOW A SOVIET NAVAL GROUP TO MAKE PORT CALLS IN THEIR COUNTRIES. A NAVOCFORMED VISIT, SHOULD ONE BE MADE, MIGHT BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE IN ADVANCE OF THE VISIT ITSELF, AND THUS MIGHT CAUSE NEGATIVE REACTION AT THE NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE, OR SUBSEQUENT CRITICISM OF THE GOT. WE ARE ALSO CONCERNED THAT IN AN EFFORT TO BALANCE, THE TUNISIANS AND OTHERS MIGHT OPEN THEIR PORTS TO SOVIET SHIPS.

3. MOREOVER, WHILE WE AGREE THAT OUR POSITION IN SUPPORT OF NAVOCFORMED VISITS TO NON-NATO PORTS MIGHT BE MORE

CREDIBLE IF WE WERE TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSED VISIT TO TUNIS, THIS FACTOR IS OUTWEIGHED BY THE FACT THAT TUNISIAN PORTS ARE THE ONLY SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN PORTS TO WHICH THE SIX FLEET HAS ACCESS - ANY POSSIBLE THREAT TO THAT ACCESS SHOULD BE AVOIDED.

4. MISSION SHOULD EVALUATE THE ADVISABILITY OF HOLDING A HIGHLY RESTRICTED SESSION (PERMREPS ONLY) OF THE DPC TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSED VISIT. WE ANTICIPATE THAT THE US
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POSITION IN SUCH A MEETING WOULD BE A FRANK DISCLOSURE OF THE POSITIONS TAKEN BY EMBASSY TUNIS (REF B) AND USINT ALGIERS (REF C), BUT THAT US WOULD NOT LAUNCH DISCUSSION OF THE SPANISH ISSUE. ROGERS

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